

Cattaraugus County Beat . . .

Letter Ties The Centuries

By MARIAN REYNOLDS



Do you remember the Times Herald article (May 19, 1960) about the Union soldier from Portville who was killed at Gettysburg? His body was found lying where he fell, the dead hand clutching a picture of his three children.

The story was about Amos Humiston, his death on July 5, 1863, his subsequent identification by means of the picture and later experiences of his widow and three children. The Civil War Centennial Feature touched off a series of small incidences.

As one minor result, actual consideration was given to naming the U.S. Army Reserve Training Center in Olean after Sgt. Humiston.

One woman is still not speaking to another because of a disagreement over the job title of the widow Thilinda Humiston, after she became associated with the National Soldiers Orphans Homestead at Gettysburg.

INQUIRIES were sent to various people, hoping to join the centuries together by some word of what happened to the descendants of Amos and Thilinda. One reply, a long, complicated genealogy, lacked current information.

Nothing seems to make history "come alive" more graphically than a living tie with the past. This week we have our "tie" in a letter written with an apology for the long delay.

In her letter, Miss Ruth T. Humiston, Jaffrey, N.H., granddaughter of Amos and Thilinda Humiston, related news of herself and other descendants of the former Portville couple. The Gettysburg casualty and his widow had three children, Franklin, Alice and Frederick Roy.

Quotes from Miss Humiston's letter:

"MY FATHER, Franklin G. Humiston, went to Dartmouth College and the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, 1886, and shortly settled in Jaffrey (N.H.) where he practiced until his death in 1912.

"Alice never married. She did office work in Boston, raised chickens on a farm, ran a cafeteria for the laboratory of the State Department of Health in Albany, maintained a home for old ladies in Rochester and on retiring went to Los Angeles, where she died from burns when her dress ignited from an open fire.

"Frederick Roy was a salesman out of Boston and had the best business head of the three.

"The three of them told us tales of their childhood in the Orphanage in Gettysburg. It was not a happy time except as they played on the battle grounds.

"MY GRANDMOTHER was matron there but disapproved so much of the methods and insufficient funds that she accepted an offer of marriage from a chance visitor who wrote to her, though she could not remember him! He was

Becket and Shirley, Mass., where they all moved. It was not too happy a marriage but the three had a good school in Lawrence Academy, Groton, Mass., where my mother's family lived.

"Fred's children, Doris and Eleanor, married and both have good homes in Belmont, Mass. Doris has no children. Eleanor lost a young boy but has a fine son in Allan, a good salesman who is doing quite well at present.

"IN MY FAMILY: Alice was a librarian until her retirement a couple of years ago. She was in the U.C.L.A. in the cataloging department for many years of which the last were as head cataloger. She still lives in that city, where she has many friends.

"Ruth (myself) was a bacteriologist with the Maryland State Health Department for 30 years, retiring in 1950.

"Helen, the much married, also taught school and did secretarial work and various other things. Her two sons are Kelleys. David is a rising archeologist, much interested in Middle America, though at present teaching at Lubbock, Tex., at Texas Tech. His wife is Curry Holden, another archeologist and museum director.

"Frank has suffered from ill health most of the time since he saw service in France in World War I. He likes farming and horses and has lived on a farm most of his married life. His son, Fred, lives in Syracuse with his wife and three children. Amos, after service in Japan, elected to stay in the Army. He married a Japanese girl and is stationed in a fort near Orlando, Fla. Kenneth is an outdoors man and lives with his father in Lynne Center, N.H.

"John was killed in France in World War I.

"Freda, stayed at home to care for Mother, who was in delicate health until her death in 1945.

"THERE ARE A LOT of interesting things I could add, for my grandmother told us many tales of her early life—how Amos "sailed around the Horn" and wanted her to go with him to the Sandwich Islands; how once he took her to Grand Rapids at the time they were felling trees for the State Capitol at Lansing; the childhood trips to Olean, Cayuga, etc.

"She was a little woman, but as a cousin said, "Aunt Linda is spry!" She had to be. There was much family talk about the Soldiers Orphans Home in Gettysburg that did not get into print. They were all glad to leave.

"At present, Freda, our nephew Charles Kelley and I live in the old home in Jaffrey where we grew up.

"I may add that the town named a playground Humiston Park, and the American Legion named the local post for John